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31 December 1958

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Report on Attendance at the Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association, Chicago, 26 - 29 December 1958

1. From 26 through 29 December 1958, I attended the annual meeting of the American Economic Association held at the Palmer House, Chicago, Illinois. Three of the sessions were directly concerned with economic activity in the Sino-Soviet Bloc. The papers read at these sessions varied greatly but some were reasonably good. It was interesting to observe, however, that only the very best of the papers presented approached the caliber of those routinely expected by ORR from its analysts. This leads to the obvious notion that ORR economists should probably be spending more time presenting than listening to papers at such conferences. It was reasonably apparent that many ORR analysts using only available unclassified data would measure up very well against the leaders in the field of Soviet economic studies.

2. I also attended two special meetings of interest to ORR. One was a roundtable discussion on problems in the recruiting of economists and the other was a luncheon to organize an association for the study of Soviet economies.

3. In the roundtable discussion on the labor market for economists various representatives of business, government, and universities commented on the problems of obtaining adequate numbers of economists with the proper attributes for vacant positions. It was generally agreed recruiting of economists was highly disorganized and that a centralized and coordinated system might well result in more effective placement. Mr. Eben Clague, of the Department of Labor, presented statistics on the employment of economists. Presently, according to Mr. Clague, there are about 17,000 economists employed in the United States. About 3,000 of these are privately employed and the remainder are divided nearly equally between teaching and government. Of the 7,000 government economists, about 5,500 are in federal service. Missing from this figure, of course, are the economists employed by CIA. Mr. Clague estimated that

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about 17,000 new economists will be graduated in the next ten years. Although some of these will fill vacancies caused by death and retirement, the majority will enter jobs created by the expanding demand for economists. An IEA representative who was at the convention attempting to lure 70 - 90 economists this year and approximately 40 - 50 per year subsequently, voiced great concern about the sparsity of good economists in the labor market. The almost impossible magnitude of IEA's recruiting task is evident when compared with the major effort ORR is required to mount each year in order to hire [REDACTED] economists.

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4. The organizational luncheon for the Association for the Study of Soviet Economics was well attended. I would estimate that upward of sixty people were present. The group approved a draft constitution and provided for the future election of an executive committee. A small bulletin will be published and the Association will also provide other services of common concern as demanded by the members.

5. During the convention I talked to several faculty people to remind them of our continuing need for good economists. These included Aron Bergson of Harvard and John Mordin and Howard Hines of Iowa State. I also talked to [REDACTED] whom I had talked to at Harvard in October. Although he remains undecided about employment with us, he still seems interested. He is to let me know when he makes his decision. Bob Jones referred [REDACTED] of Harvard to me and although we were not able to arrange a meeting I did talk to her on the phone. I also arranged an appointment for her with [REDACTED], the Agency recruiter in the area who was at the convention.

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